



Office of the State Fire Marshal

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LA SALLE COUNTY COURT IMPOSES AGGREGATE PENALTY OF \$556,500 ON GAS STATION OWNER AND OPERATOR

SPRINGFIELD – The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) announced today that on October 23, 2015, a La Salle County Circuit Court issued a Judgment Order against Alpine International, Inc., a dissolved Illinois corporation, for \$504,000 and against Ghulam Murtaza for \$52,500. The order came in response to the defendants' failure to remove abandoned underground petroleum storage tanks at a closed gasoline station, along with other violations of the Gasoline Storage Act.

"The defendants' shirked basic responsibilities to public health and safety, and violated our state laws," said State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. "They put the public at risk and this judgment serves as a reminder that there are consequences to their actions."

The abandoned gasoline station is located in Peru, Illinois and was last in operation on January 23, 2013. At the time of the judgment, two of the unsecured underground storage tanks still retained a significant amount of fuel, with the potential to cause soil and water contamination, thus posing a threat to human health and the environment. In addition, the four underground storage tanks are over 30 years old, have been out of service for over one year, and were directed to be removed. Mr. Murtaza and Alpine International, Inc. repeatedly failed to respond to OSFM enforcement notices directing them to empty and remove the storage tanks, as well as provide the required documentation for the underground storage tanks and facility.

The OSFM requested that the Office of the Attorney General file a civil lawsuit against both defendants in July 2014. A lawsuit was filed and both defendants failed to file an appearance notice. A Default Judgment Order was subsequently entered, imposing \$504,000 in penalties and fines against Alpine International, Inc. as the owner of record and \$52,500 against Mr. Ghulam Murtaza as the operator of the facility. The penalties and fines were assessed for the ongoing violations of OFSM rules concerning technical and safety requirements for the operation and proper temporary closure of underground storage tanks.

A copy of the Default Judgment Order is available upon request.

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